

The Arcade  
130 Westminster Street,  
Weybosset and Hay Streets  
Providence  
Providence County  
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-206

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RI,  
4-PROV,  
106-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

## THE ARCADE

Address: 130 Westminster Street, Weybosset and Hay Streets,  
Providence, Providence County, Rhode Island.

Present Owner: Rhode Island Association for the Blind.

Present Occupant: Owners, and various other shops and offices.

Present Use: Business building.

Brief Statement of Significance: This is a well-preserved example of an early nineteenth century business arcade, and an important, early example of the Greek Revival in Rhode Island.

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PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: Originally owned jointly by Cyrus Butler, and the Arcade Realty Company. When the building was threatened with demolition in 1944, the present owners purchased it both as an investment for their capital funds, and to preserve the building as a historic monument.
2. Date of erection: 1828.
3. Architect, suppliers: James C. Bucklin and Russell Warren; Bucklin responsible for the Westminster Street half of the building, and Warren for the Weybosset Street half. Russell Warren (1784-1882), born in Tiverton, Rhode Island and a resident of Bristol, was a self-trained architect and the earliest exponent of the Greek Revival in Rhode Island. James C. Bucklin (1801-1880) served an apprenticeship with John Holden Greene and later entered partnership with William Tallman, a builder and dealer in lumber. (Cady, Civic and Architectural Development of Providence, p. 98). The monolithic column shafts were cut by Joseph Olney at Bare Ledge quarry in Johnston, Rhode Island.
4. Sources of information: John Hutchins Cady, The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence 1636-1950 (Providence, Rhode Island: The Book Shop, 1957), pp. 98, 99, 107. Antoinette Forrester Downing, Early Homes of Rhode Island, (Richmond, Virginia: Garrett and Massie, 1937), pp. 408, 442, 444, 447, 463. Robert Alexander, "The Arcade in Providence," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, vol. XII, No. 3 (October 1953), pp. 13-16.

Henry Russell Hitchcock, Jr., Rhode Island Architecture (Providence: Rhode Island Museum Press, 1939), p. 46, Plates 47, 48.

Old Providence, A Collection of Facts and Traditions Relating to Various Buildings and Sites of Historic Interest in Providence, (Providence, Rhode Island: The Merchants National Bank of Providence, 1918), pp. 48, 49.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a large granite building, built in 1828, an interesting example of a business arcade, and an important, early example of the Greek Revival in Rhode Island.
2. Condition of fabric: Good

### B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: 216' long, cross shape plan with short wings at the center on either side; porticoes at each end, 74' wide, 15' deep; three stories high.
2. Foundations: Granite
3. Wall construction: Smooth faced, regular coursed ashlar, granite.
4. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: Ionic, hexastyle portico at each end, in antis, identical except that the Westminster Street side has a pediment, and the Weybosset Street side has an attic story. Monolithic, smooth shafts, 21' high, 3' in diameter. Capitals cut in Boston.
5. Chimneys: Low chimneys near building center not visible from either front.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Entrance to the central corridor through the porticoes, raised three steps above the sidewalk on the Weybosset Street side, four steps on the Westminster Street side. Within the porticoes, the corridor is now closed by modern, glass doors.

- b. Windows and shutters: Three tiers of regularly spaced windows on sides; simple, rectangular masonry openings, windows not noticeable due to nearby buildings.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Low, pitched roof not visible from ground, central corridor covered by skylight.
- b. Cornice: Molded, Ionic cornices on the porticoes.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: The building is laid out around a central corridor extending the entire length of the building, three stories high with balconies serving upper two floors, covered with skylight the full length and width of the corridor. Small, regularly spaced shops and offices open off the corridor and the balconies.
2. Stairways: Balconies serving upper two stories reached by straight flights of stone stairs in the porticoes, with iron rails.
3. Flooring: Modern tile floors on first floor, wood floors on balconies and upper floors.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Glazed shop fronts on the corridor and balconies; first and second floor shops have wide bay windows for display, corner posts on first floor bay windows are slender, banded colonnettes. Various shops finished differently by different tenants. Many ceilings are of patterned sheet metal, others have various, later finishes.
5. Doors: Glazed doors to shops in light, wood frames.
6. Trim: Two fluted Ionic columns at either end of the corridor from the first balcony level to the ceiling, of plaster. Balconies have delicate iron railings.
7. Hardware: Simple hardware on doors, butt hinges, round knobs.
8. Heating: Central heating in shops, corridor not heated.
9. Lighting: Electric.

## D. Site

Faces northwest on Westminster Street, southeast on Weybosset Street, on a level lot in the heart of the Providence business district, building extends full width of the block with porticoes on the sidewalk line, on both ends, separated from later, large business buildings on either side by narrow alleys.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect  
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